

Overcoming Liberal Barriers to Action

Messages we receive	<i>"There's nothing you need to do."</i>	<i>"There's nothing you would want to do."</i>	<i>"There's nothing you can do."</i>	<i>"You should defend it against those who disagree."</i>
Justification it offers	Your concern is <i>en route</i> to being amended	Your concern is actually counterbalanced by greater benefits	The thing you are concerned about is inevitable	What you see as injustice is not really injustice at all
Rationalizations given	We don't need to take care of it because it will be addressed by the government, corporate social responsibility, social innovation, etc.	It's the price you/we pay for middle class privilege/modernization/ etc.	'The world isn't fair,' expansionism and development are the way the world works, it's human nature	They deserve what they get; they're not as good or capable as we are; they haven't "pulled themselves up by their bootstraps"; etc.
Related emotion	Resignation	Denial	Powerlessness	Reactivity, defensiveness
Implications for action	Relinquishment of responsibility and agency; acceptance of observer status	Minimization and denial	Apathy, resignation; acceptance of the unacceptable, sense of powerlessness	"Blaming the victim"; Participation in / perpetuation of / failure to interrupt systemic oppression
Examples	Those who have the power are trying to figure out how to address _____, but it's complicated	Gentrification brings culture and diversity; Militarism is a necessary evil	Paying for war, eating food that's harmful, other daily actions that don't align with one's values	The activist didn't have an impact because they had a bad strategy

Questions: Do you recognize these barriers? How familiar are you with how they operate? In what ways could they be understood as integral to "liberal" or "progressive" worldviews? Does anything on the chart catch your attention and/or make you uncomfortable? Do any possibilities open up for further exploration, shifting emotional responses or taking different actions?

